

No Direction Home

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Summary: All is well in Berk... or is it? It's easy to forget some of us are far from home. A three part story about a a dragon finding his way back.

No Direction Home

****Part One of Three. Thanks for reading!****

"Yee, haw!" called Snotlout raucously as his dragon carved and threaded through the forest of jagged coastal rocks. Moonlight the Nightmare punctuated his rider's exclamation with a flourishing barrel roll. Like a bullet out of a cannon, Moonlight raced out past our race's imaginary finish line.

"Hey, do you guys see me? See how I did that?" He whooped back into the maze of stone. He put on his Snotlout arrogant grin "Yeah, you and Toothless didn't stand a chance. I finally schooled you two."

I had a great view of his celebration from Toothless's back as we drifted along about a hundred feet south of Snotlout. He was so busy waiting for us to come out of the rocks that he didn't even think to look and see we'd finished a few minutes ago and were now sunning ourselves. But I didn't see any need to point this out; I was enjoying watching Snotlout's celly.

"Oh man, you did great Moonlight," he crooned, scratching the underside of his steed's jaw.

Toothless quietly keened in envy. "C'mon, I should've named you Shameless," I muttered. He gave a sheepish huff. "Oh, fine, you big lump," I relented, snaking an arm along his jaw line, giving his scales a thorough rub. Toothless crooned in pleasure.

I finally decided to rain on Snotlout's parade. "Hey, Snuffles!" I hollered. He whipped around in surprise. "You looked great coming out

of there, man. Great form!" I clapped my hands and treated him to a smug smile.

Toothless snorted out a chuckle.

Snotlout cycled from confused to angry to crestfallen as his victory disappeared before his eyes. "Aww, don't get down, buddy," I consoled him. "There's always next time."

Moonlight grunted in agreement.

Snotlout perked up. "Yeah, and you better be ready for next time! Moonlight and I are going to fly figure eights around you guys!" Moonlight rolled his eyes at his overexuberant rider, but Snotlout didn't notice. "Let's ride, buddy!" Snotlout yelled. Flapping his enormous wings, Moonlight propelled himself off into the skies. With a chuckle, I laid out on Toothless's back.

For now, I was feeling pretty good about things. In the month since the battle, my leg healed up and I'd adjusted to the prosthetic about as well as I could've hoped. At least I wasn't falling over in pain whenever I tried to put any weight on it. With the help of our newfound draconic allies, we reconstructed Berk. For the first time in ages, the Vikings were not at war, and our houses didn't need to be fortresses. I'm proud to say I found a new love in architecture, and most of my designs panned out pretty well!

Now, much to our delight, we found ourselves in the fleeting but affectionate embrace of the Viking summer. And Toothless and I were content to drift along the coast on the sparkling cerulean sea, the midday sun warming my face and reflecting off of Toothless's ebony scales. Way off in the distance the hodgepodge of lines and triangles that we called our village stubbornly prodded the horizon line.

"This is the life, huh, Toothless?"

Toothless gazed into the sky in response. Things are perfect, I thought to myself.

Xxxx

I think things are perfectâ€|

"Everything okay, buddy?"

Toothless was perched by our window, peering out into the night sky. This was the third night this week. I had asked him what he was doing but he didn't seem to want to talk about it. It was starting to worry me a little. Even during the days I was starting to catch him losing focus, staring at the clouds. I'm not sure what it is, but I can just tell something's bothering him. "You alright, boy?"

But Toothless is a stubborn creature. He reminded me of this by promptly turning towards me, fixing me with a look that unabashedly said, 'Who, me? What could possibly be wrong with me?', and trotting away from the window towards his nook.

Toothless's nook actually gobbled up about a quarter of my room. I came home one day to discover Toothless burrowing through our

floorboards. Over the course of about a week he dug a den about three feet deep and just large enough for him to insert himself and curl up snugly. I stuffed it with the wild grass he's nuts for, and now bedtime is his favorite time. Well, was his favorite time. Before he started acting like this.

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I decided to consult Astrid about it the next day. I figure this is the kind of thing I should probably discuss with my girlfriend.

Four months in and I still balloon with bliss every time I realize I can call her that.

She's the best. Well, except when she's beating on me. That pesky habit of drilling me in the shoulder every once in a while is proving hard to break. And even though she's not training every day like she used to, those punches still hurt. She could flip me upside down, dunk my head in a lake and mop the floor with me any day of the week. I'd like to think she doesn't want to, though.

Seeing as she's my _girlfriend._

Her physical condition wasn't the only thing that had changed. Without a cloud of war hovering over Astrid, her personality bloomed. She was definitely still competitive, don't get me wrong. And she was still a hellcat when she got ticked off. But Astrid was getting sunnier every day. And you know what? I could live with that.

"Well, you have to talk to him about it," Astrid insisted, her eyes brimming with legitimate concern. We'd met at her new house by the shores. We were sitting opposite each other at the table in her greatroom. In fact, I'd helped design the greatroom. A wall of windows offered a panoramic view of the sweeping ocean. It was cloudy; the water was dusky, waves rolling and tumbling over each other like children wrestling.

I rolled my eyes. "Gee, thanks Astrid. Without you, I might never have thought of that!" I didn't mean for that to come out quite as sarcastic as it did.

"_Ow_!" I already mentioned that hitting habit, right?

"Try harder!" she pressed. She leaned in and put a hand on mine, both hands resting on the table top. "I'm serious, Hiccup."

I shifted around in my seat. "I don't even know if there's anything wrong with him," I backpedaled. "Maybe I'm just being paranoid."

"What does it matter?" she replied in earnest. "Hiccup, what could be more important to you than Toothless?" She let those words sit in the room for a while until they slipped out the window into the sea.

"Even if you think it might be nothing, it also might be _something_. You owe it to yourself and to him. You have to get through to him."

I bit my lip, thinking hard. _She's right_, I realized. I did owe it to both of us to make sure he was alright. Alsoâ€¦ if he had nothing to hide he wouldn't be avoiding the issue every time I brought it up.

Astrid squeezed my hand, sending a current of aplomb through me. "Thanks, Astrid," I said, sincere.

"You're welcome, Hiccup," Astrid replied with a golden smile. She leaned across the table and gave me a sublime kiss. I succeeded in not fainting.

I didn't want to leave at that point. "How's Spines?"

"He's good!" Astrid replied. "He's been sleeping in the hay bale out in front just because after he spiked my parents bed— yeah, you get the picture." Spines was Astrid's Nadder. Spines was a goofball who was always getting himself into some sort of trouble or another, but I think it actually brought out a maternal instinct of some sort in Astrid.

If a slightly competitive one. "We completely splattered Ruffnut and Tuffnut the other day in a race along the forest. Spines is starting to get seriously fast— you better watch your back!" she taunted.

"Oh, I think we'll see about that," I replied smartly. "Oh, Odin's Bootlace!" I blurted. "I was supposed to pick up dad on the outskirts!" I mentally smacked myself for forgetting. I flew out of my chair and dashed out the door, shouting "Bye Astrid!" over my shoulder. I heard her yelling something about leaving in the middle of a conversation, but I didn't catch all of it. _I think she'll forgive me._

Since not all Vikings rode dragons, riders like myself found ourselves serving as ferries pretty often. _I'm sure Toothless would love that thought: The Great Night Fury, now Berk's fastest wagon_. Stoick had hitched a ride out to the farmlands about five miles out from Berk earlier this morning and now he needed Toothless and I to fly him back. Well, not exactly _now_. Sort of more like _a half hour ago._

I can still recall my reaction when Stoick first climbed on to Toothless. It was something along the lines of, "Oh dear Odin, dad, dad, you are going to break him, you are going to break my dragon." Against all odds, Stoick fit on Toothless's back, assuming I scooped myself forward a little towards his neck. And even more absurdly, Toothless somehow got us all airborne! It amazes me to this day how strong his wings are.

"Toothless!" I yelled in desperation as I barreled up stone steps that led to our house. I saw his head peek out from my window, ears perked up. "Buddy, we gotta go!" He hopped out the window and glided gracefully down to the earth in front of me. "Thanks buddy. I completely forgot about picking up Dad today." He slapped me across the cheek with a scaly ear. "Yeah, yeah, everyone's a critic," I grumbled as he flapped his powerful wings and lifted us into the air.

Stoick stuck out from the sky. _Probably because he's the only guy around for a couple miles_, I figured. The sun had tumbled precariously far towards the horizon, clinging to the horizon in vain. It wasn't exactly the coast, but the farmlands were beautiful too. With the golden evening washing over the hay and the crops, illuminating the leaves on the trees until they seemed to glow like a

million radiant scalesâ€¦ it had a magic of its own.

"Hiccup, you're late! Get down here!"

Well, not exactly a magical soundtrack. "Here comes the hurricane, boy. Let's go get him," I muttered to Toothless. With a huff that sounded alarmingly like 'Drama queen', he banked downwards and landed lightly on the grass a few feet in front of the chafed chieftan.

Stoick crossed his arms. "So, yeh finally showed up, huh?" He shook his head. "Well, better late than never, I guess." With a struggle, he clambered up onto Toothless's back and secured himself in the saddle like a classic Viking: by wrapping his arms around Toothless and holding on with a vice grip.

I was surprised when Toothless let him on. I flashed back to the last time we'd been in this situation.

"_Yeh big oaf, Hiccup. C'mon now, I said to be here two hours ago! What were yeh doin' the whole time?" He huffed and puffed in frustration, lumbering towards Toothless. As soon as he began to climb up, Toothless jumped out of reach. Stoick frowned. He walked towards Toothless and again, just before Stoick could get a handhold to climb up, Toothless sprang away, chortling. Stoick was quickly turning the color of the surrounding tomatoes._

"_I don't think Toothless is too happy with those comments," I said, tongue in cheek. "Maybe you better apologize!" Toothless might have had to carry humans around, but he sure wasn't going to be taken for granted. After a slew of thoroughly Viking words, Stoick relented. "I'm sorry, Toothless," he grinded out through clenched teeth. Flicking an ear in pleasure, Toothless padded over to Stoick and batted him amicably with a wing._

Concern tugged at my chest. It was becoming hard to deny, something had Toothless in a funk. I resolved to confront him about it that night, and this time I wasn't taking no for an answer. Hopefully. Like I said, he can be pretty stubborn.

After we dropped Stoick off at the village center to finish off his business for the day, we made the brief hop, skip, and a soar back to our house. Our dwelling was one of the few buildings I wasn't involved in creating, since it was finished while I was still comatose. It was very Viking. Sharp, elaborate woodwork danced and flitted across its frame and a pair of ligneous dragons guarded the door. _Those really are unnecessary_, I thought to myself. _I've got all the dragon I need to protect me right here._

Toothless floated down on a convenient downdraft, landing a few feet from our house. The sun had long since bid Berk farewell, and I was feeling pretty worn out myself. I strode back around to the front and opened to door. Toothless was already waiting for me inside; he preferred to drop in through a window rather than squeeze through the door. I mean, why walk when you can fly?

Now or never, I figured. "Toothless," I called. He swung around to face me. I stood strong with my feet shoulder distance apart, arms crossed. Yeah, like that's going to work, I thought. I walked over to him and laid a hand on his forehead. "Buddy, I know something's

wrong." Toothless tried to shake off my hand, but I replaced it and added another. "Toothless, c'mon buddy. We're practically the two parts of one Viking... Dragon? Viking-Dragon?" I shook my head, clearing my thoughts. "This isn't gonna work if we don't communicate," I insisted, trying to be gentle but firm.

Toothless brought his head up and stared at me. I felt like I was swimming in his endless sable eyes. He pressed his forehead onto mine and gave a low keen. Biting my sleeve, he dragged me over to the window. He gazed out into the night longingly. Then he turned to me.

My mind started chugging, lobbing ideas at me. _You want to go out and fly? You want to go out more during the night? You want to go to the moon? _Toothless gave another melancholy whine. _You miss the night? You miss the sky. You miss the sky. The sky is your home._

"You miss your home."

Toothless mewed cheerlessly at my success. I sighed, deflated. My brain had ground to a halt. There wasn't much I could say or do. I gave Toothless a sad smile and wrapped my arms around his neck. Toothless rubbed his head against my arm and then shuffled over to his den. I ended up sleeping in there with him. It was tight, but I think for tonight it was better than way. Curled up against his belly I felt his heartbeat pulsing against my back. My mind wrestled with what I'd learned and what I was going to do. Sleep took me long before I could work anything out.

When I woke up, Toothless was already gone. He was probably gathering his thoughts. I sat up sheepishly in the pile of hay and wild grass, brushing myself off. I wrapped my arms around my knees and rested my head on my knees for a moment.

It boiled down to one question. Would Toothless go home? And by that, of course, I mean, will Toothless _and I_ go home?

Is it even possible for us to get to Toothless's home? How far is it? Far, my mind inferred. If it hadn't been far Toothless would've asked to go long ago. What sort of dragons would there be? What sort of dangers? There's no way it was going to be completely safe. I shook my head, sending my thoughts rattling around, bouncing off the bony walls of my skull.

I went through the day with my head in the clouds, wrestling with the problem to little avail. Toothless was still absent when I came back home at midday, and I didn't see him until the early evening. He strode straight up to me outside the house and motioned towards the sky with his head.

Even if I might have wanted to, there was no way I could misinterpret that.

Toothless wanted to go.

Does it sound selfish of me to say I wasn't sure if I wanted to do it? I hope it doesn't. I was going to leave my home, people who were relying on me and Toothless (if only for building planning and ferrying), and some people I loved very much. I didn't know how long

the journey was, or how dangerous it was going to be.

Toothless sensed my uneasiness and actually knocked me to the ground and pinned me as gingerly as he can do so. He gave me a low growl-whine and stared down at me with inky eyes. And in that moment, I realized, no matter how much I might not want to, I was going to. Because Toothless was the closest thing to a brother I had ever had. No, _Toothless was the closest thing I had ever had._ Bar nothing. No matter how risky or long this journey might be, I would stick by my best friend. I know he would do the same for me.

Stoick took it better than I expected him to. I told him that evening, over our lamb chops.

Stoick stared at his plate. He breathed out a long, audible breath. "Okay," he said at length. "There are things that Vikings have to do, Hiccup. Helping your friends with something that's important to themâ€¦ that's one of them." He gave me a bracing smile, even though I think it was forced. "And besides, who am I to tell you yeh can't go?" I felt a lot of love for my dad bubble up. We didn't always see eye to eye but Stoick loved me and I loved him back. If anything, the battle with Green Death and the changes to Berk drew us closer than ever before.

Most of the next morning was spent gathering supplies. The day was grey and cool, droplets of dew covering the grass and a strong breeze sending ripples through the fields. I tried to find the golden ratio of things to pack versus weight for us to carry. I ended up attaching two large bags to the saddle, one on each side of Toothless's midsection. Inside I dumped a few days' worth of food and a weeks worth of water (these were for emergencies; Toothless could always hunt and in a pinch he could burrow and burn his way down far enough to find water), a compass, a few somewhat questionable maps of the surrounding area, my hunting knife, two tunics, a wool sweater, a spare set of pants and a few undergarments.

It's sort of surprising how many of the necessities can be crossed off the list when you're traveling with a dragon. No real need for food or water. No need for blankets when you're curled up next to a giant furnace. The maps and compass were practically a formality; Toothless could navigate better than I could ever hope to.

There was still one person to talk to before I left. Astrid didn't put up any resistance, nor did I expect her too. She nodded when I told her the plan. "Crazy and dumbâ€¦ but what other kinds of plans do you make?" she teased. "You better come back in one piece, Hiccup."

I didn't leave her house for a while, and when I did I remembered why I didn't want to go away, even though I knew I had to.

And so, alarmingly quickly we found ourselves ready to head off into the horizon. Stoick enveloped me in a Viking bear hug that almost ended my journey before it began by nearly crushing my ribcage into a fine paste. The whole gang plus their dragons showed to see us off. Astrid and Spines, Snotlout and Moonlight, the twins and Skitty, and Fishlegs and Dozer were assembled alongside Gobber and Stoick.

Fishlegs babbled, "You'll be fine, Hiccup, nothing out there can

handle Toothless's +10 speed and accuracy!"

"You got it," I replied.

Snotlout flashed him a smirk. "If you don't come back, I don't get to beat you. You better not be trying to get out of our rematch!"

"Never," I responded with a chuckle.

"Seeya later!" Tuffnut yelled, distracted, as he brawled with Ruffnut on the ground.

"Don't die!" hollered Ruffnut as he yanked on her brother's hair.

"Gee, thanks guys," I muttered.

Gobber grinned. "Seems like kids will do just about anything to get out of bein' a blacksmith's apprentice these days."

"Nothing personal, buddy," I replied with a smile.

Astrid, once again demonstrating her complete lack of fear for public displays of affection, pulled me in for a dramatic goodbye kiss.

"I'll miss you," she said honestly. "Now go get 'em!"

As I clambered up and secured myself on Toothless's saddle, I couldn't help but feel a hail of emotions bearing down on me. Apprehension, exhilaration, reluctance, anticipation, and the distinct feeling of beginning a new adventure. Toothless sprang into the air, letting loose a ball of purple flame that exploded into a shower of golden fireballs, drawing cheers from the audience below. It was hard to say I was as enthusiastic about this as he was, but then, this wasn't about me.

Time to go home, Toothless.

Once again, thanks for reading! I've had the idea for a while and have just gotten around to working on it. The name is taken from a Bob Dylan documentary, I thought it fit quite nicely and I actually had that name in mind before I came up with the story. Funny ol' world, innit? I'd love to hear back from you if you liked it (or even if you didn't!).

End
file.